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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 SKOPJE 000373

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SUBJECT: U.S. SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE WISNER'S KOSOVO STATUS
DISCUSSIONS WITH MACEDONIAN LEADERS

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) & (D).

SUMMARY.

¶1. (C) During April 13 discussions in Skopje with U.S. Special Representative on Kosovo Talks Frank Wisner, Macedonian leaders focused on the unresolved issue of the delineated but not yet demarcated Kosovo-Macedonia border as the only open issue between Skopje and Pristina, and said they would try to get Kosovar PM Ceku to make a public statement affirming Kosovar acceptance of the border delineation during his upcoming visit. President Crvenkovski expressed doubts that either President Tadic or PM Kostunica were ready to undertake steps to prepare the Serb public for independence as a possible Kosovo status outcome, and said he believed Belgrade would instead press for the Serbs to walk out of the negotiations and would call for early elections or a referendum on the matter. Ethnic Albanian DUI party leader Ahmeti told Wisner he believed PM Ceku and President Sejdiu were ready to implement confidence-building measures to reassure Kosovo Serbs, and expressed concern about rumors in Macedonia that the international community was discussing partition as a way to address Belgrade's concerns about Serb minority rights in Kosovo.

¶2. (C) Amb. Wisner affirmed USG support for Macedonia's territorial integrity, stated that any final status outcome would have to leave borders in the region intact, and said he would urge the Kosovar leadership to be constructive on the issue of demarcation. He asked his interlocutors to support U.S. efforts to persuade Belgrade to be more forward looking in preparing their citizens for independence as a possible outcome, and for help in urging Pristina to take concrete steps to enhance minority rights in Kosovo. He told Ahmeti unequivocally that partition was not being considered as a final status option. End Summary.

VISIT TO SKOPJE

¶3. (U) US Special Representative on Kosovo Talks Ambassador Wisner visited Skopje April 13-14 for discussions with Prime Minister Buckovski, FM Mitreva, President Crvenkovski, and DUI leader Ali Ahmeti (septel reports on Ambassador Wisner's tete-a-tete meeting with Crvenkovski). Ambassador Wisner was accompanied by Special Assistant Stephen Gee. Ambassador and

P/E Chief (notetaker) attended the meetings.

MACEDONIANS FOCUS ON BORDER DEMARCATION

¶4. (C) Prime Minister Buckovski told Ambassador Wisner Macedonia wants to play a constructive role in enhancing stability in the region, in cooperation with its international partners. The GOM enjoys good relations with Pristina; the only remaining "open issue" between Skopje and Pristina is demarcation of the border, which both Buckovski and FM Mitreva described as a "technical rather than political" matter.

¶5. (C) FM Mitreva said she recently had briefed EU and NATO interlocutors in Brussels on Macedonia's "pragmatic approach" to Kosovo status issues. She noted that delineation of the border was clear; a public statement to that effect by the Kosovar side would be welcome in Skopje. At the same time, she called for a timeline for resolving the demarcation issue, noting the Eide report statement (para 72) that the demarcation of the border should be resolved before the future process ends.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Wisner reaffirmed U.S. support for Macedonia's territorial integrity and its Euro-Atlantic integration goals. He said the USG was determined to reach a final status settlement before the end of the year, and that the outcome of that settlement almost certainly would be independence, with international supervision. On border demarcation, Wisner said the issue should be settled as part of any final status solution. Wisner said he would urge PM Ceku and President Sejdiu to be constructive on the matter.

PM CEKU STATEMENT ON BORDER?

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¶7. (C) Buckovski said he had met with PM Ceku recently and would do so again, by the end of April. He said the government wanted some form of a statement from Ceku, or perhaps a declaration by the Kosovo parliament, affirming Kosovar acceptance of the existing, internationally-recognized border delineation. Amb. Wisner asked Buckovski and Mitreva to give Ceku some room for maneuver on the issue. Mitreva replied that, from a legal point of view, a political statement from Ceku along those lines was the best Macedonia could expect.

PERSUADING PRISTINA AND BELGRADE TO BE FLEXIBLE ON FINAL STATUS TALKS

¶8. (C) Amb. Wisner noted the importance of persuading Belgrade and Pristina to ensure the negotiation process went smoothly, and that the outcome would be accepted by all sides. He asked that the GOM work with Belgrade to persuade them to be flexible, and to persuade Pristina to take more concrete steps, emulating the Macedonian example, to enhance inter-ethnic tolerance in Kosovo. Buckovski agreed to do so.

PREPARING SERB PUBLIC FOR INDEPENDENT KOSOVO

¶9. (C) President Crvenkovski acknowledged that the GOM's influence in the future status process was limited, but that Macedonia nevertheless wanted to be a constructive contributor. Amb. Wisner asked for Crvenkovski's advice on how best to pass the message to President Tadic and PM Kostunica that they needed to prepare their citizens for eventual independence. He added that future status had to be determined in such a manner that borders in the region remained intact. The U.S. recognized the existing border delineation; it was not an open issue for us.

¶10. (C) Crvenkovski responded that, having visited Belgrade the week before, his assessment was that Tadic would take a "realistic, rational approach" to the status issue. However,

Tadic would not be willing to take responsibility for being the "first to announce the outcome" of the status process to the Serb public. Kostunica would be equally unwilling to do so, or to accept the reality of independence for Kosovo himself.

¶11. (C) Crvenkovski's impression was that Belgrade's reaction to a status process moving inexorably toward independence for Kosovo would be to ensure the Serbs walked out of the negotiations, to call for early elections, or to call for a referendum. It was unrealistic to expect that any Serb politician would undertake action to prepare the public for Kosovo's independence. The best that might be hoped for, given the circumstances, would be preventing the Serb team from walking out of the negotiations.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING STEPS FOR SERB MINORITIES IN KOSOVO

¶12. (C) Amb. Wisner outlined the U.S. approach on Kosovo to DUI leader Ahmeti, reiterating that Serb leaders should be prepared for independence as an outcome provided Kosovar authorities took steps to guarantee Serb minority rights. He asked Ahmeti how to get Kosovar leaders to take steps to build confidence among Serb minorities.

¶13. (C) Ahmeti replied that PM Ceku and President Sejdiu understood the importance of taking such confidence-building measures, including steps to return Serb properties. They wanted Serbs who had fled the conflict to return to Kosovo. They were ready to do whatever was necessary, whether providing security or restitution to Serbs. Ahmeti acknowledged there were Kosovar Albanian "counter forces" who wanted confidence-building between Albanians and Serbs to fail, but said such forces were of minimal consequence.

CUTTING KOSOVAR SERB TIES TO BELGRADE

¶14. (C) Ahmeti agreed that Kosovar institutions should take steps to protect the Serb minority; in return, the Serbs

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should acknowledge Kosovo as their country and cut ties to Belgrade, he said. Belgrade could not solve the problems of Serbs in Kosovo anymore than Tirana or Pristina could address ethnic Albanian problems in Macedonia, Ahmeti quipped. As soon as Kosovo was free of the ties that bound it to Serbia, a "positive process could begin to develop."

CONCERNS ABOUT PARTITION RUMORS

¶15. (C) Citing "rumors" that the international community was discussing possible changes of borders to accommodate Belgrade's concerns about Serb minority rights in Kosovo, Ahmeti said such a development would have serious consequences for the region. He welcomed Amb. Wisner's reply that there was no substance to such rumors. Amb. Wisner further assured him that the U.S. position regarding no changes in borders was shared by Ahtisaari, the EU, and the Russians, adding that he would urge PM Ceku to resolve the Macedonia-Kosovo border demarcation issue.

MILOVANOVIC